



CHIEF PETTY OFFICER JOHNNY BIVERA, USN

Members of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission question Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark, Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Michael W. Hagee and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Infrastructure Strategy & Analysis Anne Rathmell Davis during hearings on the recommended restructuring of the nation's defense installations, May 17, 2005.

BRAC 2005: It's About the Future, Not the Past

BY LTG JAMES R. HELMLY,
USAR

Since the Department of Defense released its recommendations for Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005 this past May, many have asked, "How does BRAC affect me, my position, unit, and the Army Reserve?" Such questions are natural. For that reason, I want to share with you my perspective on BRAC as we proceed through this multi-year process.

First and foremost, recognize that BRAC 2005 provides an unprecedented opportunity for the Army Reserve to change—for the better. When I assumed command of the Army Reserve

three years ago, I said that deep, profound change was needed to prepare the Army Reserve for the challenges of the 21st century. Two major changes we seek involve streamlining our command, control and support structure, and stationing our forces in the most modern facilities possible. BRAC 2005 supports both of these objectives and many more.

BRAC 2005 facilitates the streamlining of our command and control by incorporating the following Army Reserve initiatives. First, we are moving to establish four Regional Readiness Support Commands, located in the northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest. Fewer sup-

port headquarters translates to more structure invested in deployable units. These headquarters will provide base operations, facilities, logistics, and personnel support of all Army Reserve units and soldiers in their region.

Second, we are creating functional command headquarters that direct training and will command operational units, thereby improving our ability to provide those unique, skill-rich capabilities that the Army Reserve brings to the force. In that regard, we are just completing the activation of three functional commands: the Military Intelligence Readiness Command (Ft. Belvoir, Va.), the Army Reserve Medical Command (Pineallas Park, Fla.), and the Army Reserve Readiness and Training Command (Ft. McCoy, Wis.).

The command and control changes are fully supported by the BRAC 2005 recommendations submitted by DoD to the

national BRAC committee. In addition, during the BRAC 2005 process, we partnered with the other armed services to reduce costs and use our resources more efficiently and effectively. Bottom line, BRAC 2005 has empowered us to improve our training, mobilization and readiness by better positioning our force. BRAC 2005 provides a powerful engine to propel the changes we seek.

With these benefits in mind, consider the following about BRAC and the Army Reserve.

First, the BRAC 2005 process actually started in 2003 with a two-year analysis that ended this year with the release of the DoD recommendations. After the national BRAC Commission has reviewed the recommendations, they are sent to the president, who approves or rejects them. He will then forward the recommendations to Congress by the end of 2005 or early 2006. If Congress approves the plan it will be established in law, and the subsequent realignments and/or closures will occur between 2006 through 2011.

Second, the timeline of the BRAC process means the closures and realignments will not happen overnight. For instance, an Army Reserve soldier currently deployed will return to the same Army Reserve facility from



C. W. Bill Young Armed Forces Reserve Center, Pinellas Park, Fla., opened in 2005.



Ft. Story U.S. Army Reserve Center and Army Maintenance Support Activity, Ft. Story, Va.



Ft. Lawton U.S. Army Reserve Center, Seattle, Wash.

which he or she departed. Throughout the six-year process (2006–2011), the Army Reserve will work to ensure that the least amount of stress occurs for soldiers, their families, and the

Army Reserve staff members who support them. Soldiers will remain the centerpiece of the Army Reserve.

Third, the Army Reserve has been a full partner in the BRAC 2005 process since 2003. We worked closely with the Departments of the Army and Defense to ensure that BRAC recommendations result in the changes for the Army Reserve that increase our ability to accomplish our purpose under Title 10 U.S. Code—to provide trained and ready soldiers and units available for active duty at such time and place as the nation requires.

To better understand how BRAC 2005 benefits the Army Reserve, one need only review the history of Army Reserve facilities. The Army Reserve maintains approximately 5,000 buildings that cover more than 40 million square feet. We occupy more than 275,000 acres of land across the United States. This diverse array of unit stationing puts the Army Reserve on “Main Street America.” Over time, the twin challenges of aging Reserve centers and population shifts have changed where our facilities need to be located.

Following World War II, the nation sought to develop a stronger Reserve force of soldiers ready for mobilization. To that end, the late 1940s to early 1950s began an aggressive cycle of facility construction for Reserve forces. This construction peaked in

1956 and tapered off by 1970. The original life span of Army Reserve buildings constructed during this period is now approaching 50 years. As the decades passed, the buildings started to experience degradation due to years of minimal repair and maintenance funding. More often than not, funding constraints limited required repairs, necessary renovations, and replacement. The degradation of Army Reserve facilities coupled with the natural life cycle of original construction placed the Army Reserve force facilities in need of significant renovation and construction.

Since World War II, America's population shift has had an impact on the availability of Army Reserve soldiers. The shift of increased population has generally been to the south and west in the country with the greatest decline in the northeast. Recent construction within the Army Reserve primarily focused on facilities within those regions of the country matching the demographics. Earlier BRAC recommendations incorporated considerations of demographic shifts. BRAC 2005 recommendations also reflect the current changing demographics.

To mitigate the effects of aging facilities and population shifts, the Army Reserve continues to maximize facility efficiency. We are closing centers in remote areas where recruiting is difficult and where the population has dwindled. We have begun to build larger metro-

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plex centers that significantly reduce the number of smaller, less efficient, older facilities. This new approach combines multiple units into larger, multi-use joint-oriented facilities providing flexibility and reduced overhead.

We are also pursuing other ways to make the most of limited resources. For example, we continue to participate in the

Real Property Exchange program and Full Facility Restoration to extend building life cycles. We utilize previously owned properties as joint sites, establish leases, dispose of property, and employ other economic methods to reduce the cost of maintaining aged facilities.

We welcome the BRAC 2005 recommendations because they will transform some of our Reserve facilities into multi-functional installations that enhance unit readiness, increase training opportunities, and generate operational efficiencies. These transformed facilities will provide the capability to conduct Soldier Readiness Processing and Home Station Mobilization, reduce the number of substandard/undersized facilities, and enhance anti-terror/force protection of units and personnel. These actions should also promote effective recruiting and retention while adding Army Reserve capabilities to assist in homeland security and defense.

I understand that change can

be unsettling—in another words, “scary.” But it will lead to a more dynamic, agile and flexible Army Reserve. BRAC 2005 does not change the Army Reserve’s purpose, values, or position as an integral part of the U.S. Army. BRAC 2005 will change where and how we go about achieving our mission.

The Army Reserve will have ample opportunity within the timelines of the BRAC process to resolve questions and implement execution before the DoD recommendations become law. I am proud of the Army Reserve’s participation to date—it has been visionary, forward-focused, strong in analysis, and well coordinated.

Finally, although it may seem that BRAC 2005 mainly addresses buildings and installations, I want you to know it is much more than that. BRAC is not about bricks and mortar, or even saving money. The centerpiece of our organization has always been our people—soldiers, civilian employees, and families. They will always be the heart and soul of the Army Reserve. BRAC 2005 is good for the Army Reserve because it allows us to take better care of our people and set ourselves for the challenges of the future instead of remaining comfortably poised for the past.

I encourage interested readers to learn more about BRAC 2005. Go to the Army Reserve Web site, <http://www.armyreserve.army.mil/usar/home/>. The Web site is updated regularly with information on BRAC 2005. *

General Helmly is the chief, Army Reserve, and commander, United States Army Reserve Command.